

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 275

September 5, 1996, 10:04 pm
Page S-9954 Temp. Record

VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS/VA Formula Hold-Harmless Provision

SUBJECT: Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1997 . . . H.R. 3666. Bond motion to table the Harkin/Moynihan/Specter amendment No. 5197.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 60-37

SYNOPSIS: As reported, H.R. 3666, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1997, will provide a net of \$84.7 billion in new budget authority, which is \$2.8 billion under the Administration's request, \$714 million more than provided in the House-passed bill, and \$2.3 billion more than provided in FY 1996.

The Harkin/Moynihan/Specter amendment would add that no plan for the allocation of health care resources (including personnel and funds) used or implemented by the Department of Veterans Affairs would reduce funding in fiscal year (FY) 1997 for any State below its FY 1996 level if total funding for the Department was higher in FY 1997 than in FY 1996.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Bond moved to table the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Veterans should receive equal medical treatment regardless of where they live. The current formula for allocating VA medical funds among the States results in grossly unequal treatment. The result is that in some States, wealthy veterans have broad access to services, while in other States poor veterans are turned away due to lack of funds. The formula needs to be changed to get the money to the States where the veterans actually are. In general, veterans are moving from cold northern States to Sunbelt States. The funding formula ignores that shift though, with the result that some facilities in northern States are being given twice as much funding per veteran served as are southern States. Dr. Ken Kaizer, the Undersecretary of Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs, has

(See other side)

YEAS (60)			NAYS (37)			NOT VOTING (3)	
Republicans (45 or 88%)		Democrats (15 or 33%)	Republicans (6 or 12%)		Democrats (31 or 67%)	Republicans (2)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hatch	Akaka	D'Amato	Baucus	Kerrey	Hatfield- ^{2AY}	Inouye- ²
Ashcroft	Helms	Bingaman	Grassley	Biden	Kerry	Murkowski- ²	
Bennett	Hutchison	Breaux	Jeffords	Boxer	Kohl		
Bond	Inhofe	Bryan	Pressler	Bradley	Lautenberg		
Brown	Kassebaum	Bumpers	Snowe	Byrd	Leahy		
Burns	Kempthorne	Feinstein	Specter	Conrad	Levin		
Campbell	Kyl	Ford		Daschle	Lieberman		
Chafee	Lott	Graham		Dodd	Mikulski		
Coats	Lugar	Hollings		Dorgan	Moseley-Braun		
Cochran	Mack	Johnston		Exon	Moynihan		
Cohen	McCain	Nunn		Feingold	Murray		
Coverdell	McConnell	Pryor		Glenn	Pell		
Craig	Nickles	Reid		Harkin	Rockefeller		
DeWine	Roth	Robb		Heflin	Sarbanes		
Domenici	Santorum	Wyden		Kennedy	Simon		
Faircloth	Shelby				Wellstone		
Frahm	Simpson						
Frist	Smith						
Gorton	Stevens						
Gramm	Thomas						
Grams	Thompson						
Gregg	Thurmond						
	Warner						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

done an absolutely outstanding job in his efforts to improve medical care for veterans. He favors fixing the formula, and opposes the Harkin amendment as a step backward. Some veterans centers in some States are going to have to close or cut back because of inadequate workloads, and other centers in other States are going to have to be expanded. Agreeing to the Harkin amendment would greatly slow the rate of reforms, and would leave huge numbers of veterans in Sunbelt States in great need just to keep open nearly empty VA medical centers in other States. We oppose that result, and thus urge Senators to table the Harkin amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

The Harkin amendment is basically a hold-harmless amendment for VA health care center funding for this year. Under the McCain amendment that we passed yesterday, the VA is to implement a new formula for funding VA medical centers within 60 days of telling Congress the details of that formula. We do not object to giving more money for veterans' health care in those States where not enough money is now given, but we do object to giving that funding by making large cuts in funding in other States. At a minimum, we should not make large cuts without warning. Congress usually adopts a "hold harmless" provision when it makes a change in a funding formula. The Harkin amendment would adopt a 1-year hold-harmless requirement. States could still receive extra funding under the new formula, because this bill has a 2.4-increase in the VA health care budget. We think the Harkin amendment is fair, and deserves our support.